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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000209

SIPDIS

FOR HAITI EARTHQUAKE TASK FORCE AND USAID/W FOR DCHA/OFDA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [OIIP](#) [HA](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: BANGKOK ENGAGES MEDIA AND PUBLIC ON HAITI

REF: (A) State 5277 (B) Bangkok 00148 (C) State 5871

¶1. Summary: Post engaged local Thai audiences in a variety of ways to counter any possible misperceptions, inaccuracies and misinformation regarding U.S. relief efforts for Haiti. The centerpiece of the outreach was a roundtable for Thai journalists held by the Ambassador on Thursday, January 21. His statements received widespread positive coverage and, taken together with other PA-led activities, helped to ensure that the Thai public fully understands the intentions and role of the U.S. government in assisting with humanitarian relief for Haiti. End Summary.

¶2. Comment: Thai public interest in the Haiti disaster has been strong, as evident by the lead coverage and front page headlines the story has received across both print and broadcast news outlets. Although most criticism in the Thai media has focused on the "paltry" initial response from the Thai government, Post decided to proactively engage opinion-makers to head-off any misinformation and/or mischaracterizations of our commitment to assist the Haitian people and government in recovering from this disaster. End comment.

¶3. On January 21, Ambassador John hosted a media roundtable for Thai journalists that included five major Thai print dailies (The Nation, Bangkok Post, Daily News, Kao Sot, and Naew Na) and two leading national broadcasters (Channels 3 and 7). During the one-hour media interaction, the Ambassador discussed U.S. efforts to assist Haiti, but also emphasized that this was a collaborative, international effort lead by the GOH and UN. He also stressed that the U.S. is committed to the long-term, sustained effort to rebuild Haiti and applauded the RTG and the people of Thailand for their readiness to assist as well. After the roundtable, the Ambassador conducted an on camera, stand-up interview with national broadcasters Channels 3 and 7. Questions focused on two main themes: "Can you tell us more about long term aid to Haiti?" and "How are you working with the RTG?"

¶4. The Ambassador's interview with Channel 3 aired a few hours later during a special segment on the Haiti disaster featured during its late afternoon news program, while Channel 7 carried the interview with the Ambassador in its evening news broadcast (estimated combined peak viewership: 13 million). The January 22 morning edition of the Daily News (estimated circulation: 500,000) ran extensive coverage of the Ambassador's remarks from the roundtable. Several local Thai dailies carried the Ambassador's comments from the roundtable in their online editions.

15. PA also has actively engaged local media and the public in an effort to forestall potential misunderstanding and/or inaccurate reports about U.S. activities in Haiti. On January 21, PAO, IO, and AIO met with senior editors and foreign news writers from Thailand's most widely read newspaper, Thai Rath (estimated circulation: 1 million), and had a cordial discussion about a range of issues, including America's role in the Haiti relief effort. Two days earlier, the Ambassador hosted a large reception at his residence and paid tribute to Thai and U.S. efforts to relieve suffering in Haiti; in the audience were many high-level contacts and members of the media. On January 19, IO met with his European Union counterpart to compare notes on media coverage of the crisis and to ascertain points of mutual interest.

16. In an effort to reach an even broader audience, over the last week PA's Information Resource Center (IRC) has kept the Embassy website updated with the latest information on U.S. relief efforts, as well as prominently featured the "Help for Haiti" badge with a link to information on how the public can donate to cause. In addition, the IRC sent multiple Tweets on a range of Haiti relief topics from the role that U.S. search and rescue teams play on the ground to announcing the arrival of the USNS Comfort in Haiti. Many of these Tweets have been re-Tweeted and shared on several hundred Facebook pages. For example, our January 15 Tweet on where to donate money to the relief effort was re-Tweeted 101 times and had racked

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up 774 Facebook shares. All in all, Post's series of Haiti Tweets have been shared a total of 1,022 times on Facebook.

JOHN